

FIRE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of the FIRE AUTHORITY held at Council Chamber, County Hall, East Sussex County Council, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 3 July 2019.

Present: Councillors Galley (Chairman), Lambert (Vice-Chair), Barnes, Boorman, Dowling, Ebel, Evans, Grimshaw, Osborne, Powell, Pragnell, Scott, Smith, Taylor and Theobald

Also present: D Whittaker (Chief Fire Officer), M O'Brien (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), D Savage (Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer), L Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer), A Rowlands (Head of Commercial Law, BHCC), H Scott-Youldon (ADHRODTA), E Curtis (Communications & Marketing Manager), A Blanshard (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

14 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Earl-Williams, Hamilton, Peltzer Dunn and Tutt.

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Grimshaw who was attending as substitute for Cllr Hamilton.

16 NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND PROPOSES TO TAKE AT THE END OF THE AGENDA/CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS ITEMS

There were none.

17 TO CONSIDER ANY PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were none.

18 TO RECEIVE ANY PETITIONS

There were none.

19 CALLOVER

Members reserved the following items for debate:

- 7 Restricting Exit Payments in the Public Sector – Consultation on Draft Regulations

Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Fire Authority

9 Sussex Control Centre Project & Future Mobilising Options – Progress Update

20 RESTRICTING EXIT PAYMENTS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR - CONSULTATION ON DRAFT REGULATIONS

The Fire Authority received the report of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) informing them of the Government's proposal to introduce a cap on exit payments in the public sector. A revised draft response to the current consultation on the regulations to implement the cap was circulated at the meeting. (*Copy in Minute Book*)

The Assistant Director HR, OD, Training & Assurance (ADHRODTA) explained that the consultation on this proposal closed at midnight on 3 July 2019. The Authority were informed that the consultation did not include the level at which the cap would be set as this was already set in legislation. She added that whilst the cap level was not included in the consultation, it was agreed that the consequences of capping too low were recognised. The reasons why the cap was not supported were outlined within the report and additional commentary provided by the Deputy Monitoring Officer would be also included as well as any received from the Authority.

The Authority raised many concerns about the cap, including the potential effect on those who might need to retire early due to ill-health and the impact that the cap might have on both recruitment and retention of staff.

There was some question over whether the proposals now affected too many employees and not just those that were in receipt of the highest salaries, it was the opinion of the Authority that the cap had been set too low and that there were also some things that should not be included in it at all. The Authority felt it essential that the response clearly addressed why the cap was thought inappropriate and that it should be more closely targeted and set at a much higher rate.

The ADHRODTA agreed that the response at Q1 would be expanded further to include more detail. The Authority were informed by the CFO that there were some exemptions which would address those concerns regarding the ill-health and inability to perform duties, but there were concerns for those that were now expected to remain as active firefighters until 60 years old rather than the previous age of 50 and their options for early retirement.

The Authority were informed that this was a nationwide consultation and that responses had been submitted by many organisations including local authorities, the NFCC and Trade Unions.

It was generally felt that the introduction of a pay cap at this level was wrong and that the intention behind the original proposal had been forgotten, initially it was felt the aim had been to address large payments to higher earners. There were concerns that the attempt to make it apply to all was not appropriate.

Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the next meeting of the Fire Authority

The ADHRODTA thanked Members for their comments and agreed to update the draft response accordingly and to circulate to Members once submitted.

RESOLVED – That the Fire Authority:

- i. noted the Government’s proposal to implement a Public Sector Exit Payment Cap; and
- ii. agreed the proposed draft response to the consultation on the regulations to implement the cap and delegate authority to the Assistant Director HR, OD, Training & Assurance to respond to the consultation, reflecting the Authority’s views.

21 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED – That item no. 9 be exempt under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 and accordingly is not open for public inspection on the following grounds: it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

22 SUSSEX CONTROL CENTRE PROJECT & FUTURE MOBILISING OPTIONS - PROGRESS UPDATE

The meeting concluded at 11.20 am

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of

2019